

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LIBREV 02559 021101Z

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ACTION AF-08

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8629

INFO AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 2559

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS/ PINS, PINR, PINT, CM, GB

SUBJECT: GABON REOPENS NORTHERN BORDER

REFS: YAOUNDE 4555: LIBREVILLE 2419

1. GOG COUNCIL OF MINISTERS IN REGULAR MEETING NOVEMBER 30 DECIDED TO REOPEN NORTHERN BORDER WITH CAMEROON AND EQUATORIAL GUINEA WHICH HAD BEEN CLOSED SINCE MEYO-KYE INCIDENT NOVEMBER 17. COMMUNIQUE WHICH WAS READ OVER TV FOLLOWING COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING SIMPLY NOTED THAT GOVERNORS OF GABONS TWO NORTHERN BORDER PROVINCES AND GABONESE SECURITY FORCES HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO REOPEN BORDER. COMMUNIQUE ADDED THAT SAME OFFICIALS WERE CHARGED WITH ASSURING SECURITY OF GABONESE IN FRONTIER ZONE.

2. IN UNRELATED MEETING WITH FRENCH MILITARY ATTACHE (PROTECT) DEC 1, EMBASSY LEARNED THAT GABONESE GENDARMES WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR DESTRUCTION OF MEYO-KYE POST WHICH TOUCHED OFF BORDER INCIDENT WITH CAMEROON. GABONESE ACTION APPARENTLY GREW OUT OF MISUNDERSTANDING BETWEEN DELEGATINS FROM TWO COUNTIRES WHICH WERE NEGOTIATING CAMEROONIAN TAKEOVER OF MEYO-KYE POST. GABONESE HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO DEMAND \$400,000 INDEMNIFICATION FOR MEYO-KYE INSTALLATION. CAMEROONIAN DELEGATION, ON OTHER
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PAGE 02 LIBREV 02559 021101Z

HAND, PROTESTED THEY HAD NO AUTHORITY TO SETTLE ON PRICE

WHICH WOULD HAVE TO BE WORKED OUT BETWEEN "POLITICIANS" IN LIBREVILLE AND YAOUNDE. FOLLOWING IMPASSE OVER INDEMNIFICATION, BOTH DELEGATIONS WITHDREW TO RESPECTIVE SIDES OF BORDER. IT WAS THEN APPARENTLY THAT GABONESE GENDARMES INFIT OF PIQUE BLEW UP MEYO-KYE INSTALLATION . FRENCH MILITARY ATTACHE CHARACTERIZED ACTION AS CASE OF EXAGGERATED NATIONAL PRIDE.

3. COMMENT: DECISION BY GOG COUNCIL OF MINISTERS SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCES POSSIBILITY FOR BORDER CONFRONTATION BETWEEN GABON AND CAMEROONIAN AND UNDOUBTEDLY REFLECTS DECISION BY PRESIDENT BONGO TO TREAT INCIDENT AS MINOR MATTER. REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHAT ACTION, IF ANY, BONGO WILL TAKE AGAINST GABONESE GENDARMES RESPONSIBLE FOR BLOWING UP MEYO-KYE. STEIGMAN

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